Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission
South and East Beltway Comprehensive Plan Amendments Public Hearing
July 18, 2001, County-City Building

Comments by John S. Schleicher, 1430 Sumner Street #1, Lincoln, 68502-2450

--I am a resident of the Near South Neighborhood, and I am interested in historic preservation, and the economic vitality and residential viability of the core of the city of Lincoln. History is both my vocation and my avocation. Any beltway that is built through any of the three proposed eastern routes will only serve to facilitate, enable, and promote urban sprawl, which in turn contributes the decay of the urban core of the existing city. Lincoln has an active downtown area, and many historic neighborhoods in the core of the city that need to be preserved and enhanced. Urban or suburban sprawl will only take resources away from the city center.

--I personally see the need for the south beltway, to relieve truck traffic on Highway 2, but I strongly feel that an east beltway is not needed at all this time. I would encourage you and other public officials to seriously consider a no-build option. Why can't we simply pave existing gravel county roads, and widen and improve existing paved roads in the eastern part of the county?

--If a four-lane, divided roadway is indeed inevitable, as it seems to be at this point, I strongly encourage you and other public officials to follow the recommendations of the planning department staff, and select the east-middle route. This route follows the pre-existing right-of-way of the LES power lines, and is the least harmful to pre-existing homes and business on the east-close route. Most importantly to me, the middle route also avoids the east-far route, which has the largest number of historic properties that would be affected. Federal law and federal regulations, especially for potential funding of such a project, direct that the roadway route alternative that would harm the fewest historic properties must be used.

--The Stevens Creek area is the location of two National Register listed properties, the Stevens Creek Stock Farm and the Herter-Hagaman (now Sartore) Farmstead, as well as numerous other properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, which under federal guidelines have the same right to protection as listed properties. Most of these historic farm properties have pristine farm fields and pasturelands which are also included as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, but the proper boundaries of which have not been included in past historic studies of the proposed beltway routes.

--It is important to preserve not only historic buildings and farmsteads, but also the farmlands and fields that provided the economic livelihood for these farms, and in most cases still do today. This area of the county includes some of the oldest settled lands in the county, not to mention in the state of Nebraska, and many of these farms were established a number of years before Nebraska became a state in 1867, with some of them dating back to the late 1850s. I have visited farms in the Stevens Creek area many times, and enjoy this beautiful and historic area so close to my urban home.

--Those of us interested in historic preservation are not against future progress and growth for our community, but we are in favor of protecting our historic, cultural, and environmental resources as this growth and development takes place, and in preserving the quality of life in existing neighborhoods of our city. I for one chose not to live in west Omaha, and I would hate to see eastern Lancaster County become a new area known as "east Lincoln," with the same bad connotations of west Omaha, including uncontrolled suburban sprawl, terrible traffic problems, big box retailers, and so on. If a beltway is indeed necessary for our future, I strongly encourage you to please follow the educated, considerate recommendations of the planning department staff, and adopt the east-middle route, and send this on as your recommendation to the city council and county board.

Exhibit 35
July 18, 2001